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ABSTRACT

An "in-progress" grade concept was added to the grading policy of Harrisburg Area Community College (Pennsylvania) in November 1971. The "in-progress" grade, or Y grade as it is designated, signifies that a student has not successfully passed a course, but that with the agreement of the instructor he/she will repeat the course and, if successful, obtain a passing grade. The Y grade carries no credit and does not count in the student's grade point average. If the student fails to repeat the course in the subsequent semester, the Y grade becomes an F. This study is a review of the use of the Y grade in the three and one-half years since its inception. It inquires to what extent has the Y grade been used, whether students repeated the courses for which Y grades were issued, and whether students passed the course in the subsequent semester. Results indicate that through the use of Y grade many students have subsequently passed the course they were failing on first attempt, and the college has a moderately successful, non-punitive grading device. (Author/AH)

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A STUDY OF "IN-PROGRESS" GRADE

by

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Harrisburg Area Community College

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
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I. INTRODUCTION

In November of 1971, the grading system of Harrisburg Area Community College was revised to include an "in-progress" grade. In addition to the traditional grades of A, B, C, D, F, W, I, the Faculty Council and Administrative Committee accepted the proposal of the faculty's Curriculum and Instruction Committee to add a Y grade, designating work "in progress." That is, this grade would be awarded to students who had not mastered the course material by the end of the semester but who, by arrangement with the instructor, would agree to repeat the course in the immediately succeeding term. The Y grade designated that the student was "in progress" of mastering the course material, but, in fact, had not done so. As alternative to an F for failure, the student would have the opportunity in the subsequent semester to continue his/her mastery of the course. The Y grade differed from the I grade, or Incomplete grade. The I grade allowed the students to have eight weeks into the following semester to hand in late assignments. The Y grade signified that the student needed to repeat the course in order to master the material and satisfy the requirements. If the student failed to re-register for the course, the Y grade would be changed to an F grade.

Since the implementation of the Y grade, two full academic years and the Fall Term 1974 have been completed at Harrisburg Area Community College. To date, no study has been done to determine what number of students have received Y grades; did they, in fact, re-register for the same course; what grade did they receive for the course the second time?

The learning theory behind the proposed Y grade is that a student who cannot master a course within the time frame of the academic semester should

be given an alternative to the F grade for failure. The traditional 15-week semester may be an artificial time restriction working against the possibility of success for some students. The student is given a chance to repeat the course with emphasis upon the value of repetition as an aid to learning such material as the student has not mastered the first time. Moreover, the punitive nature of the F grade is eliminated. The student need cope only with the material to be mastered and does not suffer the negative effects of failure upon total academic achievement as measured by cumulative grade point average.

This practicum has undertaken the study of the application of the "in-progress" grade at Harrisburg Area Community College. It reports the effect of the use of the Y grade as measured by the subsequent grade earned when the student repeated the same course.

II. BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

(a) Review of the Literature

In 1972, the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) reported that 61% of all colleges had made changes in their grading systems (Levine and Weingart, 1973). However, an "in-progress" grade is not generally found among the alternatives to traditional grading practices as cited in contemporary literature.

It is generally agreed that the practice of grading is a method of sorting. In whatever form, grades themselves are symbols of communication sorting out levels of achievement as well as distinguishing successful achievement from failure to achieve whatever the objectives of instruction may be. Moreover, grades, whether numerical scores, letter symbols, or other distinguishing marks, are the record of past achievement or behavior and are generally used as the best single predictors available of future achievement or behavior (Rahn, 1973).

Moellenberg (1973) notes that some form of evaluation is inevitable for the good of society, but the system to be used in sorting individuals within groups should be as open and objective as possible. He calls on those who advocate the elimination of grades in education to provide an alternative means of recording achievement. There has been no dearth of proposed alternatives to the traditional letter grades used in higher education. Back in 1964, Haager cited a study by Dobbin and Smith (Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Third Edition, p.789) who reviewed 115 articles on changes in grading practices in colleges and universities. Haager concluded that despite all of the literature about suggested

changes in grading procedures, symbols and systems, no commonly accepted system had emerged after fifty years of inquiry.

Birney (1974) distinguishes between grades as a measure of achievement and grades as a factor in motivation. Many studies have dealt with the use of grades as an accurate report of specific measurement, while ignoring the power of grades to stimulate behavior, both desired and undesired. He sees the simple distinction between failing and no-failing grades as producing the greatest amount of effort in study. Above the failing level, he feels that grade distinctions do not describe study effort and independent pursuit of material since courses elicit different degrees of interest among students. He concludes that academic performance follows lines of interest, rather than grades whose value is contingent upon the value to the student of the course taken. "The grade as a cryptic unexplained symbol is of little value to the student except to warn the student of danger and moderate his effort according to his grade-achievement aspiration." (p.91)

Many of the changes in grading systems reflect this view that the only significance of grades is the distinction between success and failure, more so than the attempt to distinguish degree of success. Systems of pass/fail, successful/unsuccessful, credit/no credit and other symbolic expressions of simple polarity between success and failure are popular alternatives to graded systems of A, B, C, D, F or 4, 3, 2, 1, 0.

Stevens (1973) cites the problems of the polar systems (pass/fail, etc.) to transfer institutions. As desirable as these patterns may be to the institution using them, at the point of transfer between institutions, they

become ineffective communication between institutions concerning student achievement. In a sampling of 486 institutions, the pass/fail or credit/no credit grades were acceptable to only 55% of undergraduate institutions, 17% of graduate schools in arts and sciences, 14% of law schools, 6% of medical schools.

Reiner and Jury (1972) suggest a three-point grading system of pass, honors, no credit, which not only does away with stigma of failure but offers incentive for superior work through the honors recognition.

Sheleff (1972) proposes a "credit accumulation" system which eliminates grades and builds an evaluation based on a credit contract system. The student sets the number of credits from 1 to 5 which he/she wishes to earn in a course. Each number of credits is tied to a performance level. Over-achievement results in a greater number of credits earned; underachievement results in fewer or no credits.

Hunt (1972) reports a grading system based on multiple feedback. A transcript, kept private to the institution, records the student's own subjective evaluation on a 5 point scale; the instructor's subjective evaluation on a 5 point scale; class tests scored on a curve representing 20% of the class in 5 scales; national percentile based on CLEP test norms; and a credit-no credit summary. A public transcript would record only the student's rank in class according to core, major, and elective courses.

Influences for change in grading systems not only push for simplified grading alternatives of success and failure, for evaluation based on individual selection, personalized input, and criterion-based references, but also for "non-punitive" grading which eliminates F, and possibly D, grades

as records of failure. A large body of literature debates learning effectiveness of the reality of failure.

Elbow (1969) believes that a student has not been taught to do or know something unless he can determine on his own by clear standards whether he does or does not know it, and can or cannot do it. Too often grades represent unclear or hidden standards of success. The student is rewarded because he has done something right, but he is not sure what; but if he fails to receive the reward, "he never knows which step in the rain dance he missed." (p.220)

Marshall (1973) notes that the transition from any records of failure to pass/no record systems is really a falsification of student records to show only "the pleasant facts." He suggests a grade of Q, for "questioned" to indicate a "cry of help" which would be more meaningful than failure. (p.45) Rahn criticizes instructors who prefer to assign a mark signifying withdrawal rather than award failing grades. He calls these evaluations "artificial." He observes an increasing number of A's and B's while "below average" grades are disappearing. "Such artificial evaluations do the students a disservice in certifying non-existent competence, even though they are meant to be humanitarian or non-punitive." (1973, p.28)

However, among the advocates of non-punitive grading are some particularly significant educational leaders in the community college who relate grading practices directly to community college philosophy. Collins (1965) states that the community college exists to afford maximum education for all, not just the elite separated out by A, B, and C grades. To eliminate anyone by failure means to curtail educational opportunity and thus to

limit life which is "a crime against the psyche." (p.34) The community college is not a "sieve" to sift out the questionables. A student is not a cog to be mounted in the vast manpower machine, but rather is a unique being with one vital life to live to manhood. Value-shaping and sharing are of greater usefulness to the community than the computer-efficient elimination process of F-grade rejects.

Caldwell and Dodamead (1973) regard non-punitive grading as a more accurate way of implementing such community college philosophy by encouraging exploration by students uncertain about the future, by students who change study plans several times, by students who seek career/personal counseling, by students who choose risk courses without G.P.A. peril. In research conducted at Polk Community College (Florida), these authors found that students had the opportunity to explore and develop without punishment of F grades for unsatisfactory progress. Further, students not progressing satisfactorily tend to withdraw themselves after extended periods of receiving no credit. O'Banion (1969), Gleazer (1968) agree that there is punishment enough for a student to receive no credit after spending an entire term in unsuccessful performance without adding an F grade to his/her difficulty.

Cross (1969) and O'Banion fault community colleges for claiming to be fields for innovation but still thinking in terms of standards and quality, grades and credit hours, probation and suspension, G.P.A. eligibility for activities. If the community college is to be true to the goal of fuller development of the human potential in every student, O'Banion says it must devise practices more conducive to such student development, such as "a grading system which will allow students to feel free to take courses over or to explore weak areas, without fear of bad academic records."

Non-punitive grading involves not only the elimination of positive punishment, awarding an F grade. It involves also negative reinforcement by eliminating the negative effect of F grades on total academic grade point average. Mannello (1969) says that students should simply receive credit for courses completed satisfactorily and have credit withheld when they are not successful, with an option to retake the course. Collins suggests a P grade to indicate that the student "profitted" without achieving minimum objectives to continue on and needs opportunity to try again. (1965, p.36)

Heckel (1970) refers to the concept of "in progress" when he refers to students who encounter difficulty in a course and need more time to achieve the criterion level for success. An I grade, indicating "work in progress" would allow the student to take more time until criterion level is achieved.

Lindblade (1971) challenges non-punitive grading and "in-progress" status on the basis that failure to complete a course within the prescribed time framework is significant. As in sports, he claims, if one does not finish the race, nor perform within the rules of the contest, the participant does in fact lose. So the student who by repeating the course has in fact failed to account for the time factor in relation to successful completion. One cannot take forever to complete activities for which achievement during a prescribed period means success. Caldwell and Dodamead regard the semester or term time frame as irrelevant in measuring a student's progress toward completion of a course which is not limited by time performance. If a student takes x months of life, energy, money to achieve course objectives, he/she is no less successful in having achieved the objectives. On the other

hand, if the student continues to fall short of achievement, he/she has nothing to show in passing grade or credit earned. Let the student remain "in progress" with no credit until satisfactory completion.

The catalogue of National College of Education, Evanston, Illinois, describes "in progress courses" (1974-1975, pp.65-67):

> "For each course in which a student registers he is provided with a competency record which designates the specific competencies or demonstrated accomplishments expected for all who complete the course...This competency based evaluation is different from traditional grading systems...It is a criterion-referenced rather than a norm-referenced plan; i.e., it emphasizes criterion of achievement by the individual student rather than measure of comparison between students...It is grounded in the psychological finding that a very large proportion of human beings can achieve high quality academic levels if provided with adequate instruction and sufficient time--the essential elements of the mastery of learning concept...
>
> "No student gets by with being outstanding in just part of a course. All students are given full opportunity to succeed rather than to fail...For some it may take a little longer, but all who really try have the opportunity to succeed...
>
> "If a student has not completed the competencies of a course by the end of the term of original enrollment, the course may be designated 'in progress' and may be completed during the following term...
>
> "A student having a course 'in progress' after the end of a term must contact his instructor during the first three weeks of his next term of enrollment and make specific arrangements for completing the course or 'in progress' will be changed to 'no credit.'"

The Bulletin of Southern Colorado State College (1974-1976, p.26) describes the "IP grade--In Progress":

> "A grade of IP may be given at the close of a quarter in certain courses approved by the College Senate. Students receiving an IP grade must re-register in the course for the next quarter and must complete the work during that quarter."

"In-progress" grading receives very little reference in related literature as a variation of non-punitive grading. However, it is an attractive

alternative to non-recorded failure to achieve course objectives, to meet success criteria, and to acquire minimal performance skills. Mere avoidance of the punitive aspects of failure and accompanying academic penalties does not necessairly inspire motivation to persist with that course in which one has not experienced success, but may necessarily need to persevere. The "in-progress" grade establishes a contract between the student and the instructor which agrees that lack of passing achievement in a course within the allotted time span is not failure but rather can inspire additional effort which results in the repetition of the course experience to allow mastery of the minimal criteria of success and hopefully more. Both "failure" and "no credit" are negative evaluations. "In progress" is a positive, hopeful, and developmental expectation.

(b) Grading Policy at Harrisburg Area Community College

The grading policy of Harrisburg Area Community College allows a variety of letter symbols to be used as the academic record of a student's unsuccessful completion of course requirements. An F grade represents failure. An I grade signifies passing but incomplete work and allows the student eight weeks of the subsequent semester to complete course assignments in order to receive a passing or failing grade. A W grade indicates that the student withdrew or was withdrawn from the course and no credit is recorded as attempted nor grade points received. The withdrawal policy in effect during 1970-1971 stated that if students withdrew from a course within the first three weeks of the semester, no record of the course was entered on the student's transcript. Further, the student could withdraw from the course between the fourth and eleventh weeks and receive a W whether or not the student was doing passing work at the time of withdrawal.

However, the student could withdraw after the eleventh week of the sixteen-week term only if he/she was passing the course, designated by WP; otherwise a WF was recorded to indicate failing work at the time of withdrawal. After the eleventh week, a W was awarded for withdrawal only to a passing student when extenuating circumstances satisfied the instructor. (H.A.C.C. Catalogue, 1970-1971, p.42)

In the academic year 1970-1971, the faculty Committee on Curriculum and Instruction (C & I) was charged by Faculty Council, the faculty governance unit, to study the apparent misuse of the grading policy as an instructor's means of avoiding punitive grades to selected students or in selected courses. The I grade and the W grade were being used as substitutes for an F grade by some instructors who at the end of the term desired to spare students who failed the course from the penalties of an F grade. These arbitrary grading practices were offensive to faculty colleagues and were openly criticized by many students. The C & I Committee, whose sphere of responsibilities included "to review and recommend policies on grading," (H.A.C.C. Faculty Handbook, 1970-1971 p.13) undertook the study of this problem in the spring term but could not agree on a proposal before the end of the academic year in May 1971. During that summer of 1971, the Student Services staff, most of whom were counselors by profession and some of whom were advocates of non-punitive grading, discussed at length the problem of irregular grading practices as well as the educational psychology and philosophy of grading policy. During this time a Director of the Developmental Program was employed who had participated in conversations about an "in-progress" grade while on the staff of Southern Colorado State College. Personal notes and recollections from these conversations reveal that the "in-progress" grade

was studied as an alternative for students, "especially students enrolled in developmental skills courses. It would allow them to continue in a course in which they had made little progress without abuse of the current grading practices or receiving either a D or F grade."

It is important to note that the "in-progress" grade was proposed for all developmental skills courses, i.e., Reading, Basic English, Composition, Algebra I and Algebra II. Further discussion "pointed out that the grade might best be applied to all courses in which there was sequential skill development." The "in-progress" grade would be applied to selected courses, designated by the respective academic division wherein the course was taught. "The grade was not intended to replace W, I, D, F grades, nor should it be given in survey courses."*

The study and discussion of the Student Services staff resulted in a document, "A Proposal for Change: A Review of the Grading System at Harrisburg Area Community College," (September 29, 1971) in which one proposal advocated the alternative grade of "IP" (In-Progress), "to meet the needs of the student who is performing at a failing or near-failing level by permitting him to repeat the course at the first opportunity or the student may accept an F or D grade as he chooses." (p.3)

Meanwhile, the C & I Committee of Faculty Council had appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on In-Progress Grades to meet during the summer months when the larger committee would be absent from campus. The ad hoc committee's discussions included input from the Student Services staff. On August 3, 1971, the ad hoc committee recommended to its parent C & I Committee that an "IP" grade

*Personal notes (1974) of Allan J. Ohaver, Ed.D., formerly of Southern Colorado State College; formerly Director of Developmental Program at H.A.C.C.

be added to the grading system to designate work in progress with no credit granted nor grade point average computation (Appendix I). This IP grade would be given only after consultation by the instructor with the student in which the student could choose a D or F grade. If the student were to accept the IP grade, he/she would be obligated to re-enroll in the course in the subsequent semester when the course was offered. No student could receive an IP grade twice in the same course, nor would the IP grade be used to replace either the W or I grade. Details of the proposal were discussed by the C & I Committee on September 13, 1971. The proposal was approved by the C & I Committee on September 20, 1971, for referral to the Faculty Council and subsequently to the Administrative Committee of the college.

On December 2, 1971, the Dean of Instruction issued a memo to the academic Division Chairmen in which he reported that an addition to the grading system was approved by the Administrative Committee on November 16, 1971 (Appendix II). This memo reveals that in the intervening period the grade to be used for "in-progress" had been changed from IP to Y. The memo notes that the grade "is intended for use in courses which utilize individualized instruction but may be used in any course upon agreement between the instructor and the student." It is noteworthy that the Y grade could be used for any course, not only those designated by the division nor primarily skill-building courses as initially discussed. Moreover, the student who re-enrolls need complete "only those phases of the course which he did not complete satisfactorily during the first semester." In addition, the Dean affirmed the responsibility of the faculty to follow through on the change of Y grade to subsequent semester's grade or the Y grade would be computed as an F.

Thus the faculty was able to institute the Y grade for that same fall term which ended December 17, 1971. A memo to the Division Chairmen from the Dean of Instruction dated February 7, 1972, followed his review of the use of Y grades at the end of the fall term (Appendix III). He observed that Y grades were being given to students as a substitute for D and F grades, since apparently he discovered some students had not re-enrolled in the course for which they received a Y grade. Moreover, he cautioned that the Y grade should not substitute as an I grade for incomplete work, nor as a W grade signifying withdrawal. This study responds to the same concern for accurate use of the Y grade about which the Dean of Instruction inquired after the first term of its implementation.

The current catalogue of Harrisburg Area Community College, 1973-1975 (p.89), includes this statement about the Y grade.

> "The use of the Y grade is assigned by the instructor only after consultation with the student to settle these points:
> 1. The Y grade may be granted in place of a D or F grade when, in the judgment of the instructor, the student has shown satisfactory progress but needs more time to complete the course objectives.
> 2. The student must re-enroll in the same course no later than the next regular session in which the course is offered.
> 3. The student will be given the option of accepting the D or F grade.
> 4. No student may receive the Y grade twice in the same course.
> 5. If the student is already registered for the next semester, he must sign a Drop-Add to re-enroll.
> 6. If he is not registered, the instructor will notify the Admissions Office and the student's registration will be flagged in the Records Office."

III. PROCEDURES

At Harrisburg Area Community College records of all grades are stored in the college computer of the Data Processing Center, whose services are available to Student Services administrators. A conference was held with the Director of Data Processing, the author of this practicum, and a Student Services staff member who agreed to follow up with necessary data checks of the accuracy of the computer program. It was agreed that the computer would search out each Y grade given to a student since its implementation, effective Fall Term 1971-1972, or specifically when Fall Term grades were due in the Records Office, December 20, 1971. The computer program was designed to list also the grade given in the subsequent term when the student registered in the same course for which the Y grade had been given the first time. The computer program was run; the data was checked for accuracy and found in some instances to be faulty; the computer program was corrected and rerun; the second data output was checked and found to be reliable for study.

The resultant computer information on the actual distribution of Y grades, and follow-up semester grades, has been categorized according to numbers of Y grades given and numbers of students receiving Y grades, distribution of passing and non-passing grades replacing Y grades in subsequent semesters, academic division in which Y grades have been given, numbers of Y grades given according to semester since implementation.

Further, a sample comparison was made between students receiving Y grades and students receiving F grades in the same course, as to what grade was received when the same course was repeated. The courses selected were Mathematics 001 and Mathematics 051 because of the larger number of Y grades regularly given in these courses. The semester selected was Fall 1972 when the

largest number of Y grades was given by the parent division (MAPSE) of these two developmental mathematics courses. Moreover, these courses are illustrative of the ideal application of the Y grade to a developmental course in which basic skill development can be measured.

The study of grade point average as it applies to the academic record of students receiving Y grades has not been included in this study. An academic suspension policy has not been in effect at Harrisburg Area Community College during the period covered by this study. Moreover, the repeated grade becomes the only grade of record for grade point average computation according to the academic policy of the college. If the student does not repeat the course in the subsequent semester for which a Y grade was given, it becomes an F grade at the end of the immediately following semester. Thus, the effect of a Y grade on the G.P.A. is only temporary during the semester in which the Y grade course is repeated. For cumulative G.P.A. purposes the Y grade is immediately replaced either by a passing grade or by an F.

IV. RESULTS

The Y grade symbolizing "in-progress" was first used for the Fall Term 1971. Since that time 699 Y grades have been given to 534 students with a ratio of 1.3 Y grades per student (Table 1). Of the 699 Y grades given, 126 of these were given in the most recent Fall Term 1974. Students receiving these 126 grades have not yet had opportunity to complete the subsequent term during which they must repeat the Y grade course since that subsequent term is the current Spring Semester, the grades for which are not due until May 12, 1975 (after the submission of this study, March 31, 1975). Therefore, the number of Y grades from which conclusions may be drawn is 573, reflecting only those grades for which it has been possible that the student could repeat the course in a subsequent semester (Table 2).

Of these 573 Y grades, 208 grades, or 36%, were, in fact, not repeated. 365 Y grades were repeated and of these, 241 (66%) were replaced by passing grades (A, B, C, D), and 124 (34%) by grades signifying an unsuccessful repetition (F, W, I, a second Y). In summary, of the total 573 Y grades given in courses which were able to be repeated, 241 (42%) were replaced with passing grades, and 332 (58%) either were not repeated or were replaced by a less than passing grade. That is, 42% of the 573 Y grades given were replaced by passing grades earned in a subsequent semester. Of the 241 passing grades, 84% were C grade or better; there were only 39 (16%) D grades. One can be certain that, for students who avoided first term failure by using the 241 Y grades and successfully repeating the course with a passing grade, the "in-progress" grade policy is a success. However, an equally clear result of this study is that 58% of the Y grades have not, in fact, been replaced by grades indicating success in a subsequent semester. In 62%

of these cases, the course was not repeated. In 38% of these cases the course was repeated but unsuccessfully.

The computer files of Harrisburg Area Community College list students as Current, Non-returning, and Graduates. It is interesting to observe in Table 3 that the highest percentage of passing grades replacing Y grades was achieved by graduates (75%). This, of course, reflects the increased motivation of a student who expects to graduate to complete his/her academic requirements including removing Y grades lest they become F's. On the other hand, the highest percentage of non-repeated Y grades is left by non-returning students (56%) who, despite the agreement with the instructor to repeat the Y grade course in the subsequent term, do not return to school and thus the Y becomes an F. For nearly one-half of the current students (48%), the Y grade has offered an opportunity to pass the course in the subsequent term. As an alternative to failure and possibly dropping out of school, the second-chance nature of the Y grade has given them the opportunity to pass courses upon repeated and further effort. On the other hand, 27% of current students did not pass the course on the second effort. This, combined with 25% who have not repeated the course in the subsequent semester (but may yet do so before they leave school),results in the Y grade now being an F. That is, for 52% of current students, the Y grade offered as an alternative to F has not spared them from failure.

Table 4 records that the heaviest use of the Y grade has been in the Mathematics, Physical Science and Engineering Division of the college academic structure. This division has given 63% of the Y grades used since the inception of "in-progress" grading. It is used primarily in the two developmental mathematics courses, Algebra I (Math 001) and Algebra II (Math 051).

The Business and Management Services Division has used the Y grade to the extent of 19% of total college use. This division has used "in-progress" grading in the secretarial science courses of shorthand and typing where individualized programmed instruction and competency-based testing are utilized, and in the introductory accounting course. It is interesting to note that only 10% of the Y grades have been given by the Communication and the Arts Division which offers Developmental English courses in Reading Skills and Basic Composition. It is this author's observation from his use of H.A.C.C. computerized Grade Distribution Analyses that this division shows the reluctance to give "below average" grades, which was cited earlier in the literature as a means of non-punitive grading (p.5, cf. Rahn).

The most faithful use of the Y grade in accordance with the "in-progress" philosophical ideal of selected application to sequential courses of skill development is seen in its use by the MAPSE Division in Mathematics 001 and Mathematics 051 courses. The author chose the Fall Term of 1972 when the greatest number of Y grades (98) was given by the MAPSE Division to determine if any differences could be noted in the subsequent achievement of students who received a Y grade and then who received an F grade for the same course (Table 5).

In Mathematics 001, six students received F grades and none repeated the course. One concludes that Algebra I was unnecessary, or the F grade was not a hindrance to the academic objective of these six. Sixty-seven Y grades were given in the Fall Term 1972 and 36 passing grades were received in the subsequent semester, or 54% success. One can conclude that for 50% of those failing Mathematics 001, a Y grade was an alternative to failure

which provided a second chance for success. However, in Mathematics 051, or Algebra II, 28 F grades were given, with 22 of these grades unrepeated to clear up the F. Eleven Y grades were given, with five (45%) subsequently receiving passing grades. It appears from this comparison, if one can assume that the validity of the grade options was respected, that the Y grade is an attractive and successful alternative to failure in Mathematics 001 since 67 of the 73 failures opted for Y grades (92%). However, only 11 of 37 chose Y grades in Mathematics 051, and only seven of the total subsequently repeated and passed the course. In summary, 19% of the first term failures repeated Mathematics 051 and passed. 50% of the first term failures in Mathematics 001 repeated and passed the course.

The F grade appears to be acceptable to those who do not wish nor need to repeat the course since only six of 34 F grades were repeated, with two passing grades received. The Y grade is the choice of those who need to repeat the course. 58 of 78 Y grades did repeat the course, with only a 25% default of no-repeats. Of the 58 who repeated the Y grade, 70% achieved passing grades.

Finally, this study of the Y grade further reveals that in 344 (94%) of the 365 instances wherein the Y grade was repeated, it was repeated in the immediately following semester. In only 21 cases was the Y grade repeated in a semester later than the immediately following one. Students who do repeat the Y grade course do, for the most part, repeat it right away. The problem arising with repetition of the Y grade course centers in the 36% defaults, wherein the Y grade course is not in fact repeated as agreed to.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study are to be provided to the Administration of Harrisburg Area Community College, namely the Vice President of Educational Services, the Associate Dean of Student Services who is charged with administration of a college program centered in developmental studies, and the President of the Faculty Council for use by the Committee on Curriculum and Instruction.

Moreover, these recommendations are pertinent to this study:

(1) The Y grade, symbolic of "in-progress", is a successful alternative to the F grade. 64% of the Y grade courses have been repeated and 66% of the repeated grades have been passing.

(2) The definition of the Y grade policy needs to be emphasized frequently with both faculty and students so as to maintain the integrity of the "in-progress" grade.

  (a) The fact that 36% of repeatable Y grades have not, in fact, been repeated in a subsequent semester indicates that faculty must exercise sufficient caution that the Y grade is given only to those students who have agreed to repeat the course.

  (b) 61% of non-repeated Y grades are on the academic records of non-returning students, who thereby did not fulfill the condition of the Y grade policy to repeat the course in the following semester.

(c) The contract provision of the Y grade policy mandates that the instructor and student agree that a condition of the grade is that the course will be repeated and, in fact, is already on the registration file of the student for the immediately following semester.

(3) Other provisions of the college grading policy need to be reviewed periodically in order to clarify other grading designations that are affected by the Y grade (as per Dean of Instruction's memo, 1972, Appendix III).

(a) If a student repeats a Y grade course and withdraws, receiving a W, then Y becomes an F.

(b) If a student repeats a Y grade course, he/she ought not to receive an I or Y grade for the repeated course. The intent of the Y grade policy is that the student should complete the course work within the time frame of the second semester.

(4) The Records Office of the college needs to maintain a routine and efficient audit of Y grades at the beginning of each semester rather than only at the end, in order to follow up on the registration of the Y grade student with counseling, tutorial and supporting student services, and not only to audit the final grade replacing the Y in the subsequent semester.

(5) The Curriculum and Instruction Committee should find it timely to review the Y grade policy as presently applicable to any and all courses, in relation to early conversations about the restricted use of the Y grade:

(a) in selected courses approved by divisions

(b) by selected instructors approved by their divisions

(c) in developmental or sequential skills courses only

(6) The Curriculum and Instruction Committee is encouraged to study the present informal use of the W and I grades as non-punitive substitutes for the F grade, in light of experience with the Y grade to eliminate arbitrary grading practices by some instructors in some courses for the benefit of some students. A uniformly applicable and possibly increasingly non-punitive grading policy and practice might evolve from this moderately successful, though limited, practice of non-punitive Y grading.

(7) The academic Division Chairmen are urged to make extensive use of computer data readily available as seen in the resources used for this study. Very little study has so far been done at Harrisburg Area Community College on grade distribution, integrity of the grade, grading audits, philosophy of grades and grading practices. There is possibly no token in the academic exchange of more value to the student than the grade. Perhaps we know too little about what we do.

Appendix I

August 3, 1971

MEMO

TO: The Curriculum and Instruction Committee

FROM: Ad Hoc Committee on In-Progress Grade

SUBJECT: An Addition to Our Present Grading System

The Committee recommends the following addition for the grading system:

IP Course work in progress. Student must re-enroll in the same course no later than the next regular session in which the course is offered. No credit. Not computed in G.P.A.

Rationale: Recognizing that not all students can progress satisfactorily through a given course in one semester, the Committee proposes an in-progress grade (IP). The IP grade may be granted in place of a D or an F to any student who has demonstrated sufficient progress to convince the instructor that additional time and effort will enable him to achieve the course objectives.

The IP is to be assigned by the instructor only after consultation with the student to settle these points:

1. The student will be given the option of accepting the D or F grade.

2. If he accepts the IP he obligates himself to re-enroll in the course no later than the next regular session in which the course is offered for a grade other than IP. No student may receive IP twice in the same course.

3. If the student is already registered for the next semester he must sign a Drop-Add to re-enroll.

4. If he is not registered the instructor will notify the Admissions Office (in a manner to be worked out) and the student's registration will be flagged in the Record's Office.

The IP should not be used to replace either the W or I. Normally the student would attend for the full semester and the offer of an IP not be made until the week preceeding final examinations.

William Dean
John Goodyear
Ellen Jacobi, Chairman
Arthur James
Alan Ohaver

Note: This proposal was passed by the Curriculum and Instruction Committee on September 20, 1971.

OFFICE OF INSTRUCTION

Date: December 2, 1971

To: Division Chairmen

From: Dean of Instruction TC

Subject: In Progress Grade

The following addition to the grading system was approved by the Administrative Committee on November 16, 1971, and is available for use this current semester.

> "Y" Course work in progress. Student must re-enroll in the same course no later than the next regular semester in which the course is offered. No Credit. Not computed in G.P.A.

This grade is intended for courses which utilize individualized instruction, but may be used in any course upon agreement between the instructor and the student.

It should be understood that a student must enroll in the same course the next semester in which it is offered. He is obligated to complete only those phases of the course which he did not complete satisfactorily during the first semester. This is intended to give the student the time and the instructional support which he needs to complete the instructional objectives of a given course.

The distinctions between the "Y" and the "I"and the "W" grades should be noted. The "I" does not obligate the student to take a course over. It is an agreement between the instructor and the student to complete certain course requirements on the student's own time, but should be done within 8 weeks of the next semester.

SPECIAL NOTE - For both the "Y" and "I" grades, the instructor is required to change the grade or it will be computed as an "F" in the student's cumulative grade point average, although the grade "Y" or "I" will remain unchanged on the student's transcript.

clr

DATE: February 1, 1972

FROM: Dr. Cottingim

TO: Division Chairmen

SUBJECT: Clarification of "Y" grade

In reviewing preliminary use of this grade for the fall semester, it appears there may still be some confusion about circumstances which are appropriate for the use of the "Y" grade.

Of paramount importance is the simple fact that it will destroy and distort the potential use of the grade if it is substituted either for "D" or the "F". Moreover it should not be used as a substitute for the "I" grade which allows the student to complete work for a course within eight weeks or the "W" grade which is for withdrawal.

Please review the use of the "Y" grade with the faculty in your division to insure that we preserve the original intention of the grade. It might be helpful if you could make a brief report at the end of the spring semester as to how widely it was used this semester.

sr

Table 1 - Y Grades Given

Computer Master File	Y Grades Given	Students Receiving Y Grades
Current students	418	303
Non-returning students	229	181
Graduates	52	50
	699	534

Table 2 - Subsequent Term Grade

Repeated Grades - n = 365 (64%)

Passing Grade: n = 241 (66%)
- A - 41 (17%)
- B - 55 (23%)
- C - 106 (44%)
- D - 39 (16%)

Non-Passing Grade: n = 124 (34%)
- F - 54 (44%)
- W - 39 (49%)
- I - 14 (11%)
- Y - 7 (6%)

Grades not repeated - n = 208 (36%)

Y Grades able to be repeated - n = 573 (82%)
Y Grades given Fall Term 1974 (non-repeatable) - n = 126 (18%)

Total Y Grades given Fall Term 1971 through Fall Term 1974 - n = 699

Table 3 - Subsequent Term Grade Within Particular Student File

Computer Master File		Passing	Failing	Non-Repeat
Current Students	418	142 (48%)	78 (27%)	72 (25%)
				126 (Fall Term 1974 non-repeatable Y grades)
Non-returning Students	229	60 (26%)	42 (18%)	127 (56%)
Graduates	52	39 (75%)	4 (8%)	9 (17%)

Table 4 - Y Grades Given by Semesters According to Academic Divisions

Division	1971-1972 F	S	S/S	1972-1973 F	S	S/S	1973-1974 F	S	S/S	1974-1975 F	Total
Business		10	1	47	10	1	17	17		25	128 (19%)
Comm. & Arts	11	4	1	11	12	2	14	9	1	7	72 (10%)
Life Science							13	2	1		16 (2%)
Math/Phys.Sci.	22	20	9	98	37	2	83	66	8	94	439 (63%)
Social Sci.	9	15	1	12	4		2	1			44 (6%)
Total	42	49	12	168	63	5	129	95	10	126	699

Note: F - Fall Term
S - Spring Term
S/S - Summer Sessions

Table 5 - F and Y Grades Given in Developmental Mathematics Courses in Fall Term 1972

Course	Grade	n	Repeat/Pass	Repeat/No-Pass	No Repeat
Mathematics 001	F	6	0	0	6
	Y	67	36	13	18
Mathematics 051	F	28	2	4	22
	Y	11	5	4	2

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